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THE BIBLICAL WORLD

CONTINUING

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ONE may sometimes talk about himself and not be egotistic. There are occasions, indeed, when talk about one's self is not only proper but desirable. There is, moreover, less danger when the "self" is not an individual. THE BIBLICAL WORLD believes that in this, the last number of the current year, the last number likewise of its first year as reorganized, it may familiarly speak of its past, its present and its future. Should any one take exception, it begs leave to cite as precedent the example of many able journals. That it has a purpose in entering upon this easy chat with its constituency, no one will doubt. What is that purpose? To tell its friends something of the "inside", which perhaps many of them have already learned from a perusal of its contents month after month; to gain the closer sympathy and the more active assistance of these same friends, who, in any aid which they may render, will help not only THE BIBLICAL WORLD, but also the world at large.

NO ONE will deny that the past ten years have been years of wonderful significance in the history and development of biblical study. It will be remembered that during these years the study of the English Bible has received a place in the curriculum of our colleges never before accorded it. The young men who leave our theological seminaries are no longer wholly ignorant

of the form and structure of the books which are the foundation of all their work. Schools for the study of the Bible have been established in a multitude of places. Many of our largest cities have been stirred as never before by the scientific exposition of portions of sacred Scripture. Agencies of various kinds have been set at work to dignify and magnify the work of Bible study. The people in general have come to possess ideas about the Bible more intelligent, more reasonable, and consequently more wise and effective than hitherto had been held. Many of our most talented young men have been led in the providence of God to adopt "a new calling"—that of Bible teaching. Contributions have appeared on every side which render possible a better and truer comprehension of the scope and purpose of the sacred books. New methods of study have been introduced which, though not reactionary, have changed most radically the character of the work which we are now doing and which we are to do in the future. New foundations have been laid on which a stronger and more lasting superstructure may be reared than would otherwise have been possible. With all this work, THE BIBLICAL WORLD, under the various names which in its development it has assumed, may surely claim to have been closely identified. Modesty suggests caution at this point; but with all due modesty, it may be claimed that *The Student* in former years, THE BIBLICAL WORLD of to-day, has led thousands and thousands of men and women to a larger and better comprehension of sacred truth, has inspired many persons to work and strive for higher things, and has aided many a troubled soul which found itself in the midst of doubt and difficulty. Some will ask, What evidence have we that this claim is well founded? And we answer: The evidence of this is seen in the letters from every part of the world which hundreds of subscribers are continually sending; in the appreciation shown by the religious and secular press of this country and other countries in the use made of the material published from time to time; in the kindly words and friendly hand-grasps—for THE BIBLICAL WORLD has hands that may be shaken—received on every possible occasion. In a single day, one just beginning the work of study and investiga-

tion makes words of inquiry and requests for aid; a teacher indicates cordial appreciation of this or that suggestion which had been adopted with great advantage; a brother, old in years and of mature wisdom, writes expressing gratification that there is an instrument ready and able to render valuable assistance in so important a cause. Is it egotistical to say this? Very well, let it be so regarded.

THE WORK of the journal in the past has been, it is believed, a helpful one. Its work has also been consistent. The interests of truth are never conserved by a policy of repression; most surely does this statement hold good of everything that relates to the Bible. On the other hand, that spirit which seeks to destroy, which takes away the old without substituting for it something better, is even worse than devilish. To refuse to be identified with either the one or the other of these tendencies undoubtedly subjects one to suspicion on the part of those who are themselves already committed. From the beginning a policy of steady adherence to the great truths most commonly accepted has been maintained, but at the same time there has been exhibited an openness to consider new presentations of truth. We challenge any one to discover at any point the slightest indication of the destructive spirit. There has been no vacillation from one side to the other; there has been no attempt to startle or confound. The effort at all times has been to adopt the judicial point of view rather than that of the advocate. The desire has been not to furnish opinions which others might accept, but rather to aid those who were desirous of our aid in formulating opinions for themselves. Here we are compelled to confess that mistakes have been made. Statements have gone forth which were not sufficiently guarded, and which consequently have conveyed a meaning not intended; but human speech in its best form is inadequate at all times to express one's thoughts. THE WORLD congratulates itself, with modesty of course, that its mistakes have not been more numerous. So much for the past, which, in spite of everything, is known to have been helpful to many and in the main consistent.

THE PRESENT, in the midst of which our work moves along, is, at all events, as critical as any other present through which we have passed. Is it not perhaps more critical? How so? (1) Because of the restlessness which seems to characterize all mental and particularly all theological activity. Are we sure of the foundations upon which we have been building? (2) Because of the many new factors which are all the time being introduced; factors which demand recognition, and which, when recognized, require readjustment on every side. (3) Because of the new methods now coming into vogue, methods which have proven false much that was supposed to be true and have disclosed so much of the new as to render them suspicious. Is a crash coming? A breaking up of the beliefs of the past, with no certain and definite basis on which to rest our faith? So the alarmist would have us believe. *It is not true.* Our present is but a repetition of a thousand presents that have passed. It is our duty, as it is our privilege, to adopt the policy of the great teachers whose words and lives have during historic times guided humanity. What policy was this? That of progressive conservatism; a spirit of progressiveness which made it impossible to be satisfied with the past and which presented an ideal far in advance of the present; a spirit of conservatism on the other hand which compelled a degree of accommodation to the situation in which each found himself, and which prevented, at least in a majority of cases, radical change and open rupture. It is not always a revolutionary spirit that accomplishes most. It is with this spirit of progressive conservatism that THE WORLD takes up again the work which has fallen to it.

SINCE the future is always becoming the present, it is the policy of the future rather than that of the present which should be outlined. Here our good friends will allow us to be more specific, even though we may utter that which shall never be realized. What now is it that we wish to accomplish? How shall we proceed, and in what spirit shall we undertake the work?

IN spite of the progress already made, the ignorance of Bible thought and Bible truth is amazing. In intellectual circles comparatively high, the Bible is a book unknown and consequently lightly estimated. From the better class of our educational institutions we are now sending forth men with a respectable equipment in this department of learning. They go forth, and so strong is the prejudice against new light, so dense the ignorance of what scholarship has demonstrated beyond a doubt, that the men sent forth to uplift are dragged down and, after a few years of fruitless effort, accept the position of those whom they should have lifted up, having lost all hope of accomplishing the mission assigned them by God himself. What, then, is the difficulty? That to-day the average man and woman who accepts the Bible refuses to do that which will enable him or her to grow in the knowledge of the truth which it contains. What is the remedy? An earnest effort on the part of those whom a kind Providence has permitted to make progress in these lines to reach the thousands and millions who need to be reached in order that the condition of things may be changed. Who may do this work? Those who, after careful and patient work, have gained a comprehension of its magnitude and the proper knowledge of the great truths revealed. Who are the Bible teachers from whom to-day the masses receive their instruction? For the most part men and women who have no knowledge of the Bible, whose work, in too many cases, alas! is more hurtful than helpful, whose ignorance is only less than that of those whom they profess to teach. The real difficulty has been that the men and women trained by education and by special study for this work have grown away from the work itself. They have forgotten the great responsibility which rests upon them because of the opportunities which have permitted them thus to gain, to this or that extent, a true knowledge of the sacred Scriptures. The scholar refuses to follow the example of the great Teacher who was willing to accommodate himself to the multitude in order that they might receive instruction in a form in which it could be understood by them. Does this mean that we must make our work more popular? Yes. For the

learned there are many means of intercommunication. The people have been forgotten except by those who, in the nature of things, could not help them. THE BIBLICAL WORLD will in the future adapt itself to a broader constituency; but in doing this it will maintain the scholarly spirit which it is believed has thus far characterized it. This new adaptation will require changes. These changes, however, will not be of a nature to make the journal less valuable to its present constituency.

FOR the details of the work proposed, our friends are referred to the prospectus published in another place. The new features there announced will indicate in some degree our plans for the coming volumes. The scope will be broader; less of the technical will be introduced, there being an opportunity for the publication of this material in that other journal, *Hebraica*, which may perhaps be called the sister of THE BIBLICAL WORLD,—a sister more sedate, more technical. In a word, THE WORLD will be more popular in matter and in form than it has been hitherto. In this way its influence may be extended, and a work accomplished which to-day no one has undertaken. The spirit will be the same,—that of loyalty to the truth. This means little perhaps because it is a spirit which everyone professes. Time, however, will show to those most interested, and to those best capable of passing judgment, whether the claim of the WORLD to the exercise of this spirit is well grounded.

IN CONCLUSION, we beg permission to ask that which is the test of every close relationship. If our friends feel themselves drawn toward THE BIBLICAL WORLD, if the purpose is one which commends itself to them, if they approve the policy, if the cause represented is a cause which appeals to them, will they not *help* us? How? In many ways known to them as well as to us, and which we leave to their better judgment in each case to indicate. Come how it may, we wish the help. We need it. We deserve it. Will you give it?